

plotted Yüeh Fei's death. People came to love Yüeh Fei as a national hero and despise Ch'in Kuei as a traitor.

32. *Chung-t'ung-ch'ao* is a term for paper currency of the Yuan dynasty.

33. Chiehliang, Puchow (P'u-chou), is now Chiehhsien County of Shansi province. The chronicles of the Yuan dynasty state that Kuan Han-ch'ing was a native of Chiehliang. By "that great heroic ancestor," Kuan Han-ch'ing means Kuan Yü, born in Chiehliang, the famous general in the period of the Three Kingdoms who gave his life for his country and became a hero admired and respected by the people. Kuan Han-ch'ing's play "Lord Kuan Goes to the Feast" was written to extol him. The quotation here is attributed to Kuan Yü before his execution according to the traditional novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sankuo yen-i*).

34. This song was written in classical style by the author of this play, T'ien Han, in Kuan Han-ch'ing's name.

35. Traditional symbol of love.

36. Meaning long life or immortality.

37. T'u-lu-hun, a term from Mongolian, denotes a steward who serves a commander of one to ten thousand men.

38. This quotation is taken from "The Western Chamber" by Wang Shih-fu. (See note 39).

39. "The Western Chamber" is a drama attributed to Wang Shih-fu, Kuan Han-ch'ing's contemporary. It portrays a love affair between Chang Chun-jui, an impoverished young scholar, and Ts'ui Ying-ying, daughter of a prime minister. Ying-ying's mother separated the lovers by sending Chang to take the imperial examinations. Act IV is the climax of the work, from which the quotation above is taken, in scene 3, "The Farewell."

40. Geese are an emblem of letter-carriers.

Wu Han

Hai Jui Dismissed from Office

Translated by C. C. Huang and Edward M. Gunn

(Acts III, VI, and IX are presented in full. The other acts are summarized).

ACTS I AND II (SUMMARY)

The play opens in Hua-t'ing county in the Soochow-Nanking region of central China in the sixteenth century. Hsü Ying, the forty-year-old son of a retired prime minister, seizes the land of a local peasant, Chao Yü-shan, and abducts his sixteen-year-old granddaughter, Chao Hsiao-lan, severely beating the old peasant when he attempts to intervene. The peasant family brings suit in court, but the local magistrate accepts a bribe from Hsü Ying, allowing his servant Hsü Fu to present an alibi, and has Chao Yü-shan flogged to death.

This case brings to a head the tension between the peasants and the local gentry, the scholar-official group collectively known as the *hsiang-kuan*, who have been engaged in unrestrained seizure of peasant land. It is at this point that Hai Jui arrives in Soochow to take up his new post as governor-general of the region that included Hua-t'ing county.

ACT III: TAKING OFFICE

Cast of Characters

CHENG YÜ, prefect of Soochow, 55 years old. He is fairminded and conscientious

HSIAO YEN, magistrate of Wuhsien, 45, a corrupt official

LI P'ING-TU, prefect of Sung-chiang, about 50. He fawns upon the *hsiang-kuan*. Greedy and lawless, he is well known as "The Grafter"

Acts III and VI, from Wu Han, *Hai Jui Dismissed From Office*, trans. C. C. Huang. Copyright © 1972 by the Asian Studies Program, University of Hawaii. Reprinted by permission.

WANG MING-YU, magistrate of Hua-t'ing county
 HAI JUI, 54, grey-bearded, in civilian clothes
 LADY HSIEH, his mother, 71, strict and upright by nature
 LADY WANG, Hai Jui's second wife, 30. Gentle and timid, but loyal
 HEI P'ENG his old servant, honest and reliable
 An ARMY OFFICER and a number of SOLDIERS
 HUANG AH-LAN and VILLAGERS.

Setting

The Pavilion of Official Reception outside the Gate of Heaven, Soochow, early in June 1569.

[Officials, the army officer, and the soldiers enter, bearing flags and canopies]

CHENG YÜ Good day, my lords. Governor Hai Jui left Nanking quite some time ago, but he still has not arrived. I'm afraid we will be waiting for him in vain.

HSIAO YEN When it was heard that Governor Hai Jui was coming, the number of sedan-chair carriers of grandpa Huang Ching, eunuch and Commissioner of the silk industry, was reduced from eight to four.

LI P'ING-TU Yes. Some of the *hsiang-kuan* in our area hurriedly painted their red doors¹ black during the night to be on the safe side.

WANG MING-YU My lords, everybody says Governor Hai Jui is an honest and upright official. Just what kind of man is he?

CHENG YÜ When I was in the capital several years back, I knew Governor Hai Jui pretty well. Allow me to describe him for you.

He was most honest and upright,
 So he named himself *Kang-feng* accordingly.
 Toward the end of Chia Ching's reign,
 He made criticisms that angered the Throne.
 He tried to convince the Emperor
 That seeking longevity was a futile effort:
 "From the ancient times to the present day,
 There has never been a mortal man who didn't die.
 Wealth is being wasted in practicing superstition,
 Yet blocked are channels of civil administration.
 Miserable poverty is now widespread,
 And serious disturbances occur everywhere.
 Even the Emperor's name's become a distasteful word.
 Should this condition go on unchanged,
 It will lead the state into disaster,
 And bring disgrace to our ancestors."

[Speaks] He scolded the Emperor rather harshly. The Emperor became so enraged that he wanted to chop off Hai Jui's head. He sent people to keep an eye on Hai Jui to prevent him from escaping. Later,

when the Emperor learned that Hai Jui was already prepared to die, he was astounded, and did not know what to do. Hai Jui was then jailed in a prison for officials where he was tortured in every way. He was pardoned and released after the Emperor passed away. Now that he is coming here, you must be very careful, my lords.

[HSIAO YEN, LI P'ING-TU, and WANG MING-YU are shocked. Their faces turn pale]

CHENG YÜ The weather is scorching. Why don't we all go and take a rest inside the Pavilion of Official Reception? We'll come out when the advance guards arrive. We won't be late. Come, attendants. Clear the way to the Pavilion of Official Reception. [All exit]

HAI JUI [Off stage] Let us hurry!

[HAI JUI, LADY HSIEH, LADY WANG, and HAI P'ENG enter]

HAI JUI [Sings]

By Imperial order to inspect ten prefectures,
 I have come directly to Ching-ch'ang County.
 To fulfill my grand plans and ambitions,
 I'm going to help the weak and suppress tyranny.
 The South here is affluent and rich,
 They pay heavy taxes in grain and cash.
 People often say, "There's a paradise in heaven,
 But we have Soochow and Hangchow here on earth."
 The *hsiang-kuan* and officials are greedy and vicious,
 Unable to endure the hardship and suffering,
 From their native land they are fleeing.
 The people are wretched, their wealth drained,
 Our national life is following a dangerous trend.
 Being grateful and loyal to the Emperor,
 I am resolved to do my duty, whatever the cost.

LADY WANG [Sings]

My sweat flows like drops of rain,
 I'm drenched to the very skin.
 There's beautiful scenery by the roadside,
 Which I'm simply too weary to admire.

LADY HSIEH Son, how much further is it to Soochow?

HAI JUI The city of Soochow is just ahead. The weather is scorching. Mother, how about resting awhile before we proceed?

LADY HSIEH As you say, son.

HAI JUI I see a forest beyond. Please take a rest there, Mother. Hai P'eng, lead the way.

[LADY HSIEH, LADY WANG, and HAI P'ENG exit. HUNG AH-LAN and VILLAGERS enter]

VILLAGER C The weather is burning hot. Let's take a rest before we continue. [Seeing HUNG AH-LAN weep] Lady, why are you crying? What's the trouble?

HUNG AH-LAN I'm going to the Governor's yamen in Soochow to lodge a suit.

VILLAGER C Against whom?

HUNG AH-LAN Against Third Young Master Hsü and the magistrate of Hua-t'ing County, for their seizure of my land and my daughter, and the beating to death of my father-in-law.

VILLAGER C Tell us the details, please.

HUNG AH-LAN O, Heavens!

[Sings]

Having power and an iron hand,
The wicked Hsü Ying seized our land.
I could do nothing but cry to the heavens
When my daughter was kidnapped and grandfather killed,
We were further wronged by the magistrate of Hua-t'ing,
Because he wanted to protect the defendant.
Rushing toward Soochow for my redress,
My heart pounds till it burns under this stress.

[HAI JUI listens and nods]

VILLAGER C Such injustices! Can it really be true?

VILLAGER A Of course it's true. We all saw it happen.

[Sings]

The two graves, old and new, are there,
Burying both generations, son and father.
The former died of anguish, the latter of beating,
Then they kidnapped the girl in addition.

HAI JUI Why don't they go to the court?

VILLAGER B Pardon me, sir. You don't know it, but they did go to the court. The wronged plaintiff was beaten to death there.

HAI JUI Can this be true? Which article of the law allows them to do that?

VILLAGER A The magistrate said they made false charges against the *hsiang-kuan*.

HAI JUI How could they be false charges? Did anyone testify to that?

VILLAGER A Yes, the defendant's house servant, Hsü Fu, did.

HAI JUI Ha! How can a house servant testify for his own master? Anyway, what did he try to prove?

VILLAGER B He said on the day of *Ch'ing-ming* Third Young Master Hsü was studying all day at the house of a county school student of the same city, so he never left town.

HAI JUI Which Third Young Master Hsü was that?

VILLAGER A It was none other than the third young son of Prime Minister Hsü.

HAI JUI So. Since Third Young Master Hsü did not leave town, how could he have done things like kidnapping and beating in the countryside?

VILLAGER A Rubbish! That's like seeing ghosts in broad daylight. We all saw him do it, kidnapping and beating, both.

HAI JUI It's your fault, in that case. Since you saw it happen, why didn't you go and testify?

VILLAGER B Listen, my dear sir.

[Sings]

At the court we all truthfully testified,
But it meant nothing to the magistrate bribed;
He accepted the *hsiang-kuan*'s words,
Yet he would not trust our eyes.

HAI JUI So the words of the *hsiang-kuan* were true, while the testimony of the poor was false.

VILLAGER Precisely.

HAI JUI The *hsiang-kuan* was alone and you were many. Even then the magistrate would not believe you?

VILLAGER A How would you, sir, know the grievances of the poor? We are all tenant farmers of the Hsü family. We dare not say too much.

HAI JUI I see. So you are all tenant farmers of the Hsü family.

VILLAGERS All our lands have been seized by the Hsü family. In addition, we still have to pay taxes and do labor service. You don't know how we suffer.

HAI JUI Again, this is your own fault. Why didn't you sue?

VILLAGERS A and B Sir, since you are not a local man, we can't blame you for not knowing. The prefect is the notorious "Grafter," and the magistrate is infamously corrupt. How would we dare sue? [Sings]

The doors of the official yamen are open wide,
But cash alone can determine who is right.
Big or small, they are officials just the same;
The poor people have only their misfortune to blame.

HAI JUI Well, since neither the magistrate nor the prefect will help you, where will you go now?

VILLAGER C We'll go to lodge suits with the governor of Soochow.

HAI JUI The governor of Soochow is not interested in money and will act in your behalf?

VILLAGER That's right. The new governor Hai Jui can definitely act in our behalf. Listen here.

When I was a rice merchant,
Many years ago, in Ch'un An,
Everybody spoke highly of Hai Jui,
As an honest and upright man.
He reduced the number of post-stations and simplified
taxation;
He abolished labor service and other old practices.

Agriculture and the people's welfare were his sole concerns,
 Consequently, all the refugees did return.
 His daily life was simple and frugal,
 No one ever saw such a good official.
 Jailing the young rascals and removing the despots,
 His judgment on each case was clear and fair;
 When he was transferred to another town,
 The people's hearts were filled with despair.

HAI JUI You really believe he will act in your behalf?

VILLAGER C Of course. Even before he arrived to take office, there were already announcements encouraging the people to air their grievances. If he didn't act in our behalf, he couldn't have been called "the clear and blue sky above."

HAI JUI Oh, I see.

[*Sound of music comes from offstage*]

VILLAGER B The officials have arrived to welcome the new governor, "Hai, the azure sky." Let's see what he's like.

[HUNG AH-LAN and the VILLAGERS crowd forward and bump into the oncoming officials and soldiers. VILLAGER C is knocked over by a soldier. No sooner than HAI JUI helps him up, he again collides with LI P'ING-TU]

LI P'ING-TU You blind old fool, how dare you bump into me. Guards, give the old fool a thrashing.

[*The soldiers swing their whips, but are stopped by CHENG YÜ. Officials and soldiers exit. Frightened, HUNG AH-LAN and VILLAGERS also exit*]

HAI JUI He is merely a minor official, yet he is so pompous and overbearing. It's easy to imagine how he preys on the common people every day.

[*Sings*]

The common people come here in crowds,
 With lawsuits against those tyrants.
 Helping the old and leading on the young,
 They have traveled to this distant town,
 Because the local officials, greedy and cruel,
 Are just packs of foxes and wolves.
 Exacting illegal taxes and coveting bribes,
 They bring untold suffering to the masses.
 That bureaucrat pushes the people around,
 In order to show that his power abounds.
 His behavior tells the simple story
 That he is despotic and haughty.
 Now that I am governor of this region,
 The commoners will be treated as my own children.
 I will suppress evil and help the good people,
 And get rid of all those vicious officials.

[*Chants*]

To uphold the law and tighten discipline,
 To destroy tyranny and protect the innocent,
 I am determined to do all within my power,
 Because I must fulfill my long-cherished ambition.

[*Exit*]

ACTS IV AND V (SUMMARY)

In Act IV Hai Jui visits Hsü Chieh, father of Hsü Ying. It is clear that while the two men are old allies in the Imperial court, Hsü Chieh is intent on protecting his son, while Hai Jui sees the need to bring him to justice.

In Act V Hai Jui's mother counsels him that while he may feel gratitude for Hsü Chieh's past support in disputes at the Imperial court, his first duty now is to uphold the law and seek justice regardless of personal consequences. Hai Jui determines to re-open the case against Hsü Ying.

ACT VI: JUDGMENT

Cast of Characters

HAI JUI

OFFICIALS of Soochow and Sung-chiang

HUANG AH-LAN and other VILLAGERS

HSÜ YING

HSÜ FU, dressed as a student

INSTRUCTOR of the Hua-t'ing County School

ADJUTANT, ARMY OFFICER, SOLDIERS, COURT RUNNERS

Setting

Central hall of the Soochow Governor's yamen, ten days later.

[*Officials of Soochow and Sung-chiang enter*]

CHENG YÜ [*Chants*]

Daily at the yamen gate await summons.

LI P'ING-TU [*Chants*]

Our hearts pounding with worries.

HSIAO YEN [*Chants*]

Why have orders still not come?

WANG MING-YU [*Chants*]

I feel like I'm on pins and needles.

HSIAO YEN My lords, we went to welcome the Governor, but we missed him because he was wearing civilian clothes. He has since shut himself up inside the yamen, not wishing to receive any officials, civil or military. Every day he goes to the river to supervise the work, and he

only talks with poor peasants, workers, and small traders, I don't know why.

CHENG YÜ We missed him because he came to town in civilian clothes. I suppose he would not feel offended by that. However, he has not opened the official seal and held court since his arrival. There are a hundred matters waiting for his decision to start. It worries me that he does not come out and take charge.

LI P'ING-TU It's strange, indeed. He asked me to come and see him; yet I have been here several days and he has not summoned me. I have no idea what has happened.

WANG MING-YU Every day I come and wait outside the yamen, but nothing happens. I'm really worried. [ADJUTANT enters]

ADJUTANT The governor has given orders to open the yamen doors and hold court. [Exit all officials]

[Music plays. Army officer, soldiers, yamen runners enter. HAI JUI also enters, wearing his official silk hat and scarlet robe]

HAI JUI [Chants]

I must strengthen law and order,
And redress grievances for the masses.
The people have suffered more than they can bear,
Because the *hsiang-kuan* are cruel and lawless.
To kill the dragons and tigers is a man's duty;
And I need no monument to serve my country.

[Speaks] I am Hai Jui, Governor of Ying-t'ien. Since I took office I have learned that the *hsiang-kuan* and the rich people here are despotic and lawless. The officials are corrupt and oppressive. Positive criminal evidence has been found concerning all those involved. The law clearly prescribes that all evil men must be gotten rid of. In today's court trial I definitely must uphold this ideal, to wipe out the blot of evil, to protect the people. Men, summon the officials.

ADJUTANT Officials of Soochow and Sung-chiang, enter the court, please.

[All officials enter, with heads bowed]

OFFICIALS Allow us to pay our respects to Your Excellency. When Your Excellency arrived, we went to welcome you, but didn't see you. We earnestly hope that you will forgive us.

HAI JUI I'm grateful that you went to meet me. You missed me because I traveled without horses, and in civilian clothes. You are not to blame. Besides, since we have all already met, there's no need for this ceremonious greeting.

LI P'ING-TU May I ask Your Excellency where we met?

HAI JUI In front of the Pavilion of Official Reception. Please look up, so we can recognize each other.

[The officials look up in alarm. LI is frightened and at a loss]

HAI JUI Please be seated. I have something to discuss with you.

OFFICIALS Thank you.

CHENG YÜ May I venture to ask Your Excellency if a date has been

chosen to open the seal and make official announcements?

HAI JUI It won't be necessary to choose a date because we shall do it today. Adjutant, pass the order to open the seal in order to make official announcements.

ADJUTANT Yes, Your Excellency.

[ADJUTANT holds the official seal and stamps the announcement on the bulletin board. Soldiers hold the bulletin board and leave the stage]

HAI JUI My lords.

OFFICIALS Your Excellency.

HAI JUI How have you performed your official duties?

OFFICIALS We have always been honest and careful, serving the Imperial Court on the one hand and sharing the worries of the common people on the other.

HAI JUI Is it really so? You have really been serving the Imperial Court on the one hand and sharing the worries of the common people on the other?

OFFICIALS Yes.

HAI JUI Ha, ha! Since you are all honest officials, then, I will request your participation in the trial of this case. Who's the magistrate of Hua-t'ing County?

WANG MING-YU I'm here, Your Excellency.

HAI JUI Let me ask you, how did you handle the case concerning Hung Ah-lan?

WANG MING-YU That? That case has been tried and concluded according to the dictates of justice.

HAI JUI How, precisely, did you settle it according to the dictates of justice?

WANG MING-YU Hung Ah-lan accused Hsü Ying of having abducted her daughter and of having injured her father-in-law. I summoned the defendant. It turned out that Hsü Ying was studying at county school student Chang's house and never left town that day. It was clear that the wicked woman was making false accusations. I thought it reasonable to expel her from the court and refuse to consider her case further.

HAI JUI Who testified that Hsü Ying did not leave town on the day of *Ch'ing-ming*?

WANG MING-YU The Hsü head servant Hsü Fu was with Hsü Ying that day. He testified at the court.

HAI JUI Aha! So there was a witness, and he was a servant of the Hsü family. Now let me ask you another question. How did Chao Yü-shan die?

WANG MING-YU Well, well, I merely hit him lightly a few times. Who'd have thought that he would suddenly die on account of his age?

HAI JUI Ha, ha! "Died suddenly; settled according to the dictates of justice." Adjutant, summon all parties involved in Hung Ah-lan's case to court.

[ADJUTANT passes the order. HUNG AH-LAN, VILLAGERS, HSÜ YING,

and HSÜ FU all enter]

HUNG AH-LAN [*Howling bitterly*] My lord, Your Honor, you must redress the injustices done to me!

HAI JUI There's no need to cry. Tell me the whole story truthfully.

HUNG AH-LAN Your Excellency!

[*Sings*]

Ever since they wronged me,
I've born the injustices to this day.
The tyrant seized our land,
So my husband died grievously.
Then they abducted my young daughter,
And beat my father-in-law to death.
Magistrate, how could you have done it,
Relying solely on false testimony?

HAI JUI Seizure of her land, her husband's grievous death, her young daughter's abduction, her father-in-law's being beaten to death—how pitiful! What injustice! This is truly outrageous! Hsü Ying!

HSÜ YING *Ying-kuan* Hsü Ying is here, Your Excellency.

HAI JUI You've heard Hung Ah-lan's accusations. Are they true?

HSÜ YING I'm the son of a Prime Minister. Book learning and the teaching of propriety have been our traditions. How could I do such unlawful things? Besides, I positively did not leave town on the day of *Ch'ing-ming*; county school student Chang can testify to it. The case has been tried and concluded according to law by Magistrate Wang of Hua-t'ing County. I do hope that Your Excellency will not believe the onesided accusations made by the wicked woman, and that Your Excellency will also take into consideration my father's humble name so as to settle this case justly.

HAI JUI Since you have a witness, it should be easy to settle the case, should it not?

HSÜ YING It's a universal court practice to rely on witnesses and evidence. If there is falsehood, I am willing to take the punishment.

HAI JUI Well said—"willing to take the punishment." Student Chang!

HSÜ FU Here I am, Your Excellency.

HAI JUI You must tell the truth. Was Hsü Ying in fact studying at your house on the day of *Ch'ing-ming*?

HSÜ FU Positively. There's not the slightest doubt. Third Young Master Hsü not only studied that day, he also wrote an essay!

HAI JUI What essay did he write?

HSÜ FU [*Stammering*] He wrote the . . . "Thousand-Character Text."
No . . . he wrote the "Hundred-Surname Text."²

[HSÜ YING *pales*. He stamps his foot]

HAI JUI [*Banging the desk*] Nonsense! You brazen dog! How dare you try to pass yourself off as a county school student? You will be severely punished for this!

HSÜ FU Forgive me, Your Honor. But my hat is genuine.

HAI JUI Genuine? Well, let me ask you. When did you enter school?

HSÜ FU Well . . . well . . .

HSÜ YING May I report to Your Honor, he really is a county school student. I can vouch for that.

HAI JUI Shut up! Is the instructor of the Hua-t'ing county school here?

INSTRUCTOR I am here, Your Excellency.

HAI JUI Is this a student of yours?

INSTRUCTOR I've never seen him before. He's not a student at our school.

[HSÜ YING trembles, and HSÜ FU kneels down]

HAI JUI You brazen scoundrel! How dare you pretend to be a student, acting as a false witness in order to harm the good people. Guards, take him away. He will be flogged to death at once.

HSÜ FU [*Kowtowing*] My great lord, Your Honor, please, spare my life. I will make a truthful confession.

HAI JUI If you confess truthfully, your life will be spared. Who are you?

HSÜ FU My name is Hsü Fu. I am Third Young Master Hsü's servant.

HAI JUI If you are a servant, why did you then pretend to be a county school student?

HSÜ FU Forgive me, Your Excellency. I was ordered to do so; it was not of my own will.

HAI JUI You wretch. Let me ask you again, exactly, where was Hsü Ying on the day of *Ch'ing-ming*?

HSÜ FU He was visiting ancestral graves and Heng-yü Mountain and was having a good time.

HAI JUI Was Chao Hsiao-lan abducted by Hsü Ying, and, if so, where is she now?

HSÜ FU I myself grabbed her under orders from the young master. She was tortured in every way, but she refused to submit. She is even now shut up in the Hsü residence.

HAI JUI And why did you beat Chao Yü-shan?

HSÜ FU When we were seizing Chao Hsiao-lan, Chao Yü-shan tried to stop us. So the young master ordered us to beat him.

HAI JUI Was he seriously injured?

HSÜ FU Yes, very seriously. Wounds all over his body.

HAI JUI Why, then, did the Hua-t'ing magistrate say that Chao Yü-shan was not injured when they examined him?

HSÜ FU By orders from the young master I bribed the prefect, the magistrate, and the coroner. The coroner received money so he had to say that Chao was not injured.

[LI P'ING-TU and WANG MING-YU stand up, trembling]

HAI JUI How much was the bribe? Who witnessed it? Speak the truth!

HSÜ FU Three hundred ounces of gold for the prefect and two hundred for the magistrate.

[WANG MING-YU, LI P'ING-TU, and HSÜ YING kneel down, trembling]

HAI JUI Did you deliver the gold personally?

HSÜ FU Yes, I did.

HAI JUI How did Chao Yü-shan die?

HSÜ FU He was beaten to death by the Hua-t'ing magistrate; that was how the case was settled.

HAI JUI You witnessed it?

HSÜ FU Yes, I saw it with my own eyes.

[WANG MING-YU, LI P'ING-TU, and HSÜ YING kowtow to admit their guilt, and beg for mercy]

HAI JUI [Sings]

You heartless creatures, so corrupt and filthy,
You've soiled your official robes with infamy.
Heavy as the mountain, the law cannot be lenient;
To punish you for crimes, I will not relent.

[Speaks] I will now pass sentences upon you. Hsü Ying abducted a young girl by the name of Chao Hsiao-lan, and brutally beat her grandfather Chao Yü-shan. Furthermore, he bribed the Hua-t'ing magistrate who, relying on false testimony, beat Chao Yü-shan to death. Hsü Ying will be hanged in accordance with the law. Of his property, the portion which he seized from other people shall be returned to its lawful owners. The rest shall be confiscated. Chao Hsiao-lan shall be released and reunited with her mother. Wang Ming-yu broke the law by accepting a bribe and flogging the plaintiff to death. His head shall be chopped off. Li P'ing-tu, nicknamed "Grafter," accepted bribes and broke the law. He shall be dismissed from office and imprisoned while waiting for final decisions from the Imperial Court. Hsü Fu pretended to be a county school student, delivered bribes, and gave false testimony. But considering the fact that he was forced to do these things, and since he has confessed everything, he deserves leniency. Therefore he shall receive one hundred floggings and three years' imprisonment. The coroner accepted a bribe and made false testimony. He shall be dismissed from duty, and shall receive one hundred floggings and two years' imprisonment. My lords, are the sentences fair?

CHENG YÜ Your Excellency is doing all this to eliminate public evils, which deserves all my respect and admiration.

HSÜ YING [Kowtows] Governor, my great lord, please consider my father's humble name and spare my life.

HAI JUI Say no more. If a prince breaks the law he will be punished just like a common man. Take them away!

[Soldiers bind WANG MING-YU, LI P'ING-TU, HSÜ YING, and HSÜ FU. Exit]

HAI JUI Hung Ah-lan, is there anything else you'd like to say?

HUNG AH-LAN My great lord, Your Honor. You've avenged the people. May you have dukes and marquises in your family for ten thousand

years. [She kowtows]

HAI JUI Elders, many thanks for the enlightenment I received from you when we chatted together the other day. Now that the case is concluded, is there anything else you wish to say?

VILLAGER A My great lord, your sentences are most fair. But our lands were seized by the Hsü family and other *hsiang-kuan*. And yet, we still have had to pay taxes. The peoples' lives are extremely hard. We hope Your Honor will do something.

VILLAGERS B and C My great lord, you must please do something.

HAI JUI Adjutant, make a written announcement ordering all *hsiang-kuan* to return to the people, within ten days, all the land they have seized. There must be no delay. Those who refuse to obey the order shall be punished in accordance with the law.

ADJUTANT Yes, Your Excellency.

VILLAGERS [Kowtowing]

Your Excellency has acted in our behalf. The common people of Kiangnan will have a better life from now on. We are deeply grateful. When we return home we shall paint your portrait and worship it morning and night.

[Sing together]

Today we've seen the cloudless blue sky;
To rebuild our homes, we shall work diligently.
Having land, we shall lack neither clothes nor food,
In the near future, we shall find a better livelihood.

[Speak] We thank your great lordship!

HAI JUI There's no need. You may go home now.

[HUNG AH-LAN and VILLAGERS kowtow and leave]

CHENG YÜ and HSIAO YEN Your Excellency, may we take leave of you?

HAI JUI Wait. Magistrate of Wu County.

HSIAO YEN Yes, Your Excellency.

HAI JUI Your reputation is bad because you are grasping and wasteful. Are you aware of your crimes?

HSIAO YEN Yes, Your Excellency.

HAI JUI You are dismissed from office, to be sent home. Adjutant, remove his official silk hat.

[ADJUTANT removes HSIAO's silk hat. HSIAO leaves the stage]

HAI JUI Prefect of Soochow.

CHENG YÜ Yes, Your Excellency?

HAI JUI Announce to all officials that they should remain at their posts with peace of mind; they need not worry.

CHENG YÜ Yes, Your Excellency. I'll take leave of you now. [Exit]

HAI JUI Well! It has taken more than ten days to settle this case. Flood control work in the Wusung River is going well. But the Pai-mao River needs dredging also. The simplified and unified tax system must be introduced into new regions. After all this is done, the people can breathe a sigh of relief.

[Chants]

Exerting great effort to wipe out corruption.
I'm trying to wash clean the administration.
To aid the oppressed against the strong,
It's an official's duty to right a wrong.

[Exit]

[ADJUTANT and soldiers enter, holding a written announcement. A soldier beats the gong and the ADJUTANT reads the announcement aloud]

ADJUTANT Listen carefully, everyone; especially the *hsiang-kuan*: Hai Jui, Third-Class Censor of the Censor General's Office and Governor of the ten prefectures of Ying-t'ien, makes the following announcement to all regarding the question of giving back the land to its lawful owners: the *hsiang-kuan* and other ferocious despots have, in the past, seized many people's land. Consequently, the peasants have become unemployed and lived miserable lives. The law demands that all the land thus seized must be returned to its lawful owners. Anyone who dares to disobey this order will be duly punished.

[The common people listen quietly, then leave the stage happily. ADJUTANT and soldiers also depart]

ACTS VII AND VIII (SUMMARY)

In Act VII Hsü Chieh begs Hai Jui to spare his son's life, recalling their past friendship. Hai Jui adamantly refuses, invoking his higher loyalty to the Emperor and revealing his demand that the local *hsiang-kuan* return huge amounts of land which they have forcibly seized from the peasants. Hsü Chieh threatens to use his connections at the Imperial court to have Hai Jui dismissed. And, in Act VIII, Hsü Chieh arranges to impeach Hai Jui and have him replaced by a new governor-general.

ACT IX: DISMISSAL FROM OFFICE

Cast of Characters

HAI JUI

ADJUTANT, ARMY OFFICER, SOLDIERS, YAMEN RUNNERS

TAI FENG-HSIANG, 50 years old, newly appointed Governor of Ying-t'ien

TAI'S ADJUTANT, ARMY OFFICER, SOLDIERS, YAMEN RUNNERS

HSÜ CHIEH, former prime minister, father of Hsü Ying

HSÜ YING, WANG MING-YU

Setting

The main hall in the Governor's yamen, Soochow, five months after Hsü Chieh has begun impeachment proceedings.

[TAI FENG-HSIANG enters in his official silk hat and scarlet robe, under

a parasol canopy and banners, attended by his ADJUTANT, ARMY OFFICER, SOLDIERS, and YAMEN RUNNERS]

TAI FENG-HSIANG [Chants]

What brings me to Kiangnan with all this commotion—
nothing less than official promotion.
What fits with ease in my well-padded sash—
a hundred thousand in strings of cash.
Don't give offense to the powers that be,
act as dumb as you please,
And in the search for the life of ease,
it's a must to bend with the breeze.

[Speaks] I am the newly appointed Governor of Ying-t'ien, Tai Feng-hsiang. Recently a letter from Prime Minister Hsü urged me to come without delay, and so, spurring my horse, I ride on. [Exit with his retinue]

[Enter HSÜ CHIEH]

HSÜ CHIEH [Chants]

I'm riding out fast to greet our next governor,
Sparing no effort to rescue my son.

[Speaks] The Execution Office of the Governor's yamen has sent a messenger to report that Imperial orders to hold the autumn assize will arrive any time now. Our new governor, Tai Feng-hsiang, is also on his way. To save my son's life I'm riding out to greet the new governor, for there's no time to lose. [Hsü exits, lashing his horse with his riding crop]

[ADJUTANT for HAI JUI enters]

ADJUTANT By order of the governor, court is now in session.

[HAI JUI enters in his official silk hat and scarlet robe, attended by OFFICIALS, ARMY OFFICER, SOLDIERS, and YAMEN RUNNERS]

HAI JUI [Chants]

We are commanded by the Throne to enforce the law,
By removing the heinous and upholding the right.

[Speaks] Guards, bring out the condemned, Hsü Ying and Wang Ming-yu, and carry out the sentence at the time appointed.

[HSÜ YING and WANG MING-YU enter, escorted by GUARDS]

HAI JUI [Speaks]

Hsü Ying and Wang Ming-yu, the Imperial orders to hold Autumn assize have arrived, condemning you to be executed on the spot. Criminals!

[Chants]

You have snared yourselves in the legal nets of the state:
Let those who will, reform, or see in you their fate.

HSÜ YING and WANG MING-YU Spare us, Your Honor. [Both kowtow]
HAI JUI Remove them for immediate execution.

[HSÜ YING and WANG MING-YU exit, escorted by GUARDS. TAI FENG-HSIANG's ADJUTANT enters]

ADJUTANT All hear the Imperial decree!

[Drums beat and TAI FENG-HSIANG enters with HSÜ CHIEH and their retinue]

TAI FENG-HSIANG In accordance with the will of Heaven as entrusted to His Majesty, the Emperor decrees: "Hai Jui, Governor of Ying-t'ien, is dismissed from office to return to the fields of his home. Tai Feng-hsiang is herewith appointed Governor of Ying-t'ien. Obey this."

HAI JUI Long live the Emperor! May it please His Majesty's Emissary, for what offense is Hai Jui dismissed and ordered home?

TAI FENG-HSIANG Officials at court have impeached you for misusing the people and abusing the *hsiang-kuan*.

HAI JUI As Heaven is my witness!

[Sings]

The people are the victim of the *hsiang-kuan*'s violence,
Driven from their fields as if by tigers and wolves.

Any charge I've mistreated the *hsiang-kuan* is nonsense;
To dismiss me on these counts is absurd.

[Speaks] May it please His Majesty's Emissary, when is the new governor to arrive and assume office?

TAI FENG-HSIANG I am the new governor. Your Excellency, it is an honor to meet you.

HAI JUI An honor to meet you, Your Excellency. Since Your Excellency has arrived, allow me to offer some views to you.

TAI FENG-HSIANG Please proceed.

HAI JUI [Sings]

The people are the victim of the *hsiang-kuan*'s violence,
Driven from their fields as if by tigers and wolves.

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HAI JUI An honor to meet you, Your Excellency. Since Your Excellency has arrived, allow me to offer some views to you.

TAI FENG-HSIANG Please proceed.

HAI JUI [Sings]

The greatest evil in Kiangnan are the *hsiang-kuan*.
With their lands seized, the farmer's lot's near to hopeless.
An injustice so grave, it demands strong redress:
Till their lands are returned the people will live in distress.

TAI FENG-HSIANG Silence! The Emperor has dismissed you precisely

because you have used the people as so many tigers and wolves to ruthlessly force the *hsiang-kuan* off their own lands.

[Sings]

It is fate that ordains each man's status and wealth;
Leave the ignorant in hardship, it's where they belong.

Thinkers live well and laborers suffer:

You've read so in classics now for so long,

How could you use people like tigers and wolves

To savage the *hsiang-kuan*, you know that is wrong.

HAI JUI Who is in the wrong?

TAI FENG-HSIANG You are.

HAI JUI Silence!

[Sings]

You speak of the people as tigers and wolves;

Do you know what the *hsiang-kuan* have left them to eat?

"Lo, the poor *hsiang-kuan*" rings the cry at the Court;

Does it know about people left grain husks to eat?

With lip-service to peasants as the empire's foundation,

Officials plunder them behind a façade of virtue and right,

Shielding exploiters and deceiving the Throne,

Their own shadows shame them by day, their beds by night.

TAI FENG-HSIANG You can't talk to me that way! I am outraged!

HSÜ CHIEH Your Excellencies, let's not carry this too far. Kang-feng, I meant well when I warned you before that you can't get away with offending so many people and abusing the *hsiang-kuan*. But you were adamant; you wouldn't listen, and now that you've been dismissed to go home I have this to say:

[Sings]

In your prime you've had spirit but not learned submission,

So you've courted failure now for some years.

Excessive in pursuing the law as your mission,

You have gone to extremes by injuring others.

We talked once before, but you would not listen.

You slipped this time to face the world as it is.

I'd advise you, in future, seek self-cultivation,

Be a "civil" official and keep your blade sheathed.

HAI JUI Sir!

[Sings]

You've spoken without weighing the ideas in your words.

I may be dismissed, but my name will remain.

What's inside a man should match his appearance,

And plotting to ruin a friend is profane.

HSÜ CHIEH Who's been plotting to ruin you?

HAI JUI You!

[Sings]

At court you worked for the harmony that upholds the state,
Through Confucius, Mencius, and tales of former kings.
In the country you let your son plunder its wealth,
Through bribes, extortions, and unconscionable rapings.
You may deceive the Emperor with false judgments;
You may smear the people as tigers and wolves;
You may claim for the *hsiang-kuan* unspeakable torments;
But where will you hide from the common man's hate?
I have lost the silk hat of office, but not my conscience.
The day will come when I hold office again,
and uphold the laws of the state.

HSÜ CHIEH If you're that stubborn there's no point saying anything more.

ADJUTANT It is the appointed time. I request orders to execute the condemned.

TAI FENG-HSIANG and HSÜ CHIEH [Alarmed] Execute whom?

HAI JUI By order of the Imperial court we are executing Hsü Ying and Wang Ming-yu immediately.

HSÜ CHIEH No! [He pales and trembles]

TAI FENG-HSIANG Pass the order to halt the execution.

HAI JUI Execute them.

TAI FENG-HSIANG As the newly appointed governor, I order the execution cancelled.

HAI JUI As the present governor I order the execution to proceed.

TAI FENG-HSIANG Your Excellency, they must not be killed.

HAI JUI Why not?

TAI FENG-HSIANG I have a directive from State Secretary Li and the Venerable Feng, Minister of Rites, to stay the execution of Hsü Ying in view of Prime Minister Hsü's advanced years and distinguished service to the state, and to await further instructions.

HAI JUI And where is this directive?

TAI FENG-HSIANG It will be here shortly.

HAI JUI And in the meantime?

TAI FENG-HSIANG In the meantime I am ordering a stay of execution as directed by Secretary Li and Minister Feng.

HAI JUI But you have no authority to issue orders.

TAI FENG-HSIANG What do you mean "no authority"?

HAI JUI How can you issue orders while I still hold in my hands the *ling-chien*³ and the seal of office? I have not yet given away this authority.

TAI FENG-HSIANG Very well, give them to me.

HAI JUI I absolutely refuse. I am under Imperial orders to conduct the autumn assize. And when the execution has been carried out, then I will surrender my authority to you.

TAI FENG-HSIANG Sir!

[Sings]

To ignore the Court's edict is no small offense.
You're looking at death for you and your clan.
Show Minister Hsü consideration due a venerable man,
And keep impulse from leading to a regrettable stand.

HAI JUI Ha, ha!

[Sings]

It is by edict that I've judged and passed sentence,
And a matter of course it be carried out promptly.
How can I base judgments on personal sentiments.
So be it, then, if that's judged an offense.

TAI FENG-HSIANG Then you don't fear death?

HAI JUI A true man stands his ground and accepts the burden heaven places upon him. To let his fear of death decide in favor of the guilty is to grovel shamelessly. [He holds up the *ling-chien*] Adjutant, give the order for execution.

ADJUTANT [Taking the *ling-chien*] Yes, Sir.

[The ADJUTANT exits. Three cannon shots sound. HSÜ CHIEH falls to the ground in a faint. TAI FENG-HSIANG is so startled he's at a loss what to do. HAI JUI holds up the seal of office]

HAI JUI Your Excellency, here is the seal of office. I pass it to you now, and take my leave.

[TAI FENG-HSIANG is numb with astonishment. HAI JUI is still holding out the seal of office to him as the curtain falls]

CHORUS [Behind curtain, sings]

Swept by the moaning wind, heaven and earth turn cold.
A thousand times ten thousand, the ties that fail to hold
The Patriarch Hai, powerless to protest his southern
journey, homeward bound.
Yet in the lighted incense of ten thousand homes
as a living Buddha, the memory of him is found.

[The End]

Notes

1. Red doors indicated great merit and wealth.
2. The "Thousand-Character Text" and the "Hundred-Surname Text" were well-known primers used by schoolchildren in those days, but hardly suitable exercises for an advanced scholar like Hsü Ying.
3. The *ling-chien* is a flag attached to an arrow, signifying the authority to issue orders.